# Trendsurfing

# TREND-SURFING

## Innovating on Waves of Change

Bert Van Thilborgh

Dedicated to my three parents:

Albert Van Thilborgh (°1926 – †1981)
Louisa Nollet (°1927)
Jean-Paul Smekens (°1935)

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# PART 2: YOUR OWN TREND RESEARCH

# Preface

During the spring of 2014, an intern in PR and communication management told me that after her internship she was going to take a postgraduate course in trend-watching at HOGENT. I could hardly believe my ears that training in trendwatching skills was already being organised in Belgium. After quite a lot of research, I finally tracked down the course manager and sent her an e-mail requesting more information. A few weeks later, I registered for the course, which started at the end of September that year. It marked the beginning of an intensely busy period. It required me to combine full-time working with a family full of pubescent teenagers and the coordination of the construction of our house in Ranst – and now on top of that I was embarking on a postgraduate course in trendwatching. A course that contained no fewer than thirteen different subjects!

What had I gotten myself into? Was it the expression of some kind of midlife crisis or was it just a derivative of the trend development that we call 'lifelong learning'? I think that both factors played a role in explaining this new initiative. The course satisfied my insatiable thirst for knowledge and gave me new purpose and meaning in my professional career.

I graduated in June 2015 and a few months later I made the decision to go through life – and earn my living – as a trendwatcher and future thinker. It seemed to me the obvious thing to do; an extension of what had become my life's work.

The first chapters of my new life had been written in the final decades of the previous century and the foundations were laid by my studies in history. Ever since I was young, history has been my greatest passion. I have always been interested in the pasts of different peoples and cultures. It excited me to see patterns and find connections between historical events and developments. For me, history – particularly when viewed from the optimistic perspective of a belief in continual progress – is an ongoing process of civilisation, in which people become involved

and play a role both individually and collectively. History was therefore the logical choice of subject when I went to university.

During my studies, I worked as a freelance journalist for newspapers and magazines, which later led me into the professional world of media and communication. In the meantime, 'real' life was also happening: starting a family, teaching in secondary school, continuing with my freelance work and even starting my own company, which during the intervening years has undergone a number of transformations. But I never lost my love for history and my passion for thinking about the present and sketching an outline of how things might evolve in the future.

Since the start of the new millennium, we have developed campaigns both for large multinational companies and for more modest SMEs (Small to Medium-sized Enterprises), campaigns that we can today confidently describe as daring, progressive, innovative and trendy. During that same period, I became familiar with the work of Alvin Toffler, Faith Popcorn and other international trendwatchers. This is when the first seeds were planted for the work in which I am currently engaged.

Throughout my 20-year career in our agency in the marketing, PR and communication industry, we systematically built up our knowledge and expertise, and we were responsible for the exciting launches of hundreds of new products and services. But in the meantime, I found myself increasingly tied down by the present and the issues of the day. I was constantly busy with our existing customers, suppliers and staff, as well as trying to find new ones. I was negotiating with banks to finance our growth. I was working hard to constantly add product knowledge and was actively following the latest trends in our own and other related industries. I realised that it was time for a change, and I opted to transform both myself and our business activities. I wanted something new, something different. My trendwatching studies were the catalyst.

After completing my postgraduate course, I wanted to know even more about trendwatching. I read hundreds of articles and books, which gradually shaped my ideas about what would eventually become Futureproved Trendwatchers. A new career as a keynote speaker suddenly presented itself. My subject was – and still is – trends and change processes in our rapidly evolving world. In addition, I also became a coach to help organisations consider the future and innovate based on relevant trends (something that we will examine in detail in the second part of the book).

*Trendsurfing – Innovating on Waves of Change* is my first venture into the world of writing and I am already burning with ambition for more. The writing bug has got me in its grip, and I am certain that my other ideas will eventually find their way into print and new books or publications.

The first impetus for me to write this present book came from keynote speaker Luk Dewulf. Luk was a spectator at one of my keynotes and he advised me to put down my thoughts on paper for others. This happened at the end of 2018. Since then, the idea of writing a book about trendwatching has been constantly on my mind, almost an obsession, you might say. Within a matter of months, I had already presented a rough outline of *Trendsurfing* to Pelckmans Publishers.

In the meantime, I did plenty of additional research. I wanted – and was determined – to write a unique methodological book on trendwatching. Lots of books had already been written about current trends, but there was no structured methodological book to explain what trends are, how they can be categorised, and how they can be used to innovate. It was my intention to create that book.

However, I first put my further research and the writing of *Trendsurfing* on hold for more than a year and a half to work on a book about corona trends. This was a mistake. I worked for months and months on this second book but eventually concluded that it was no longer a good idea. The moment had passed. As a result, I have archived that manuscript, although I have included some small sections on the same subject in *Trendsurfing*.

I resumed my writing in the early summer of 2022, and it soon became clear that my brief sojourn into the world of corona trends had helped to develop a ripening process that I needed to refocus more clearly on the methodological story behind trendwatching. In my opinion, this resulted in better and sharper insights, which I have only integrated into the book in recent months.

*Trendsurfing – Innovating on Waves of Change* has become a book that is only partly about trendwatching, but also with a clear link to change, innovation and improving quality of life. I have built on existing knowledge but have not been afraid to challenge established norms and wisdom. I offer sources and models that will allow my readers to become trendwatchers themselves. With this book, we can walk the paths that lead to possible futures together.

As a result, for me the circle is complete. The past, the present and the future now all have a place in my life, a development to which this book, in its way, has made an important contribution.

At the same time, *Trendsurfing* is also my personal story and some passages have been written from that perspective, spiced (hopefully!) with a touch of humour and a healthy degree of self-mockery.

No writer is perfect, and no book is perfect. For this reason, I challenge my readers, whether they be CEOs, business leaders, marketeers, innovation specialists, policy-makers or even just ordinary students: if you have a different vision about some of the things that I have written or if there is additional information you would like to share with me, I would be delighted to receive all your ideas, comments and criticisms. You can contact me via bert@futureproved.be

I hope that my book will provide you with both information and inspiration – and that this will change your life for the better, even if only a little bit!

Bert Van Thilborgh
31 October 2022 (coincidentally my birthday!)

# Acknowledgements

The writing of my book *Trendsurfing – Innovating on Waves of Change* was preceded by years of reflection, doubt, perseverance and research. The writing process would not have been possible without the help and support of a great number of people, who I would now like to put briefly in the spotlight.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents. They have given me huge opportunities and have always supported me in my development as a person. For this, I am eternally grateful and therefore dedicate this book to them with much love. *Trendsurfing* is an ode to my parents.

During the writing process, my wife Inge Pincket often had to get by without me. I regularly withdrew into my writing bunker and, as a result, was not always alert, available, or accessible for the thousand and one other things that family life involves. I thank her for having the patience of a saint and love that knows no bounds. Our three children Evelien (world traveller), Sebastiaan (creative musician) and Charlotte (stand-up comedian and future teacher) and our two live-in children Bharama Tutanon from Bangkok (promising industrial designer) and Lisa Ogura from Tokyo (future lawyer) are not only my constant rays of sunshine, but also my best sounding board. They gave me the energy I needed to push through, whenever writer's block threatened to get the better of me. Also, a word of heartfelt appreciation for my parents-in-law, André Teysen and Helga Vandenbossche.

Many of my friends and acquaintances were aware of my writing plans and followed my progress (or lack of it) with interest and encouragement. During our conversations or walks in nature, the content of the book was a frequent theme and their desire to help was genuine. Thank you to all of you for just being there, for listening and for occasionally offering your comments and critical notes.

learning. Thank you for sharing your insights into society and political trends with me. A final mention must also be made of all the many other CEOs, marketing directors, innovators, designers, architects, historians, sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists who have inspired me during countless meetings in recent years.

During my transition into becoming a trendwatcher and future thinker, but also throughout the writing of *Trendsurfing*, you have all been of immeasurable value to me. Words cannot express how grateful I am for your support, help and inspiration.

# Glossary

The following is a summary of the most important terms that will recur throughout *Trendsurfing – Innovating on Waves of Change*. Defining them here will avoid confusion and the necessity of repeating them later on.

Self-evidently, we will start with the most important of these terms: **trends**. The remaining terms are then ordered alphabetically.

> **Trends** are processes of change in human behavior within a societal context. They manifest themselves in different ways and in different social groups, striving to improve the quality of life through innovation. Trends are dynamic, evolutionary, influential, impactful and they leave traces in society. Trends are observable and express themselves through ideas, language, culture, (life) style, taste, behavior, products, services and events.

**Action motives:** these replace the pyramid of needs model developed by Abraham Maslow. These motives have equal weight (hence the model's octagonal shape) and can have biological, security-related, psychological, individual, collective, cognitive, aesthetic and negative origins. Such motives form the basis for our actions and therefore also determine our behavior.

**Anti-trend:** a trend development that goes against one of the dominant trends of the moment.

**Behavior:** the combination of human action motives, values, norms and expectations. Changing behavior results in new trend developments.

**Conshuman:** a contraction of 'consumer' and 'human', which looks at people from a holistic perspective and does not simply define them as economic actors, driven by the laws of marketing communication. The behavior of conshumans is more broadly based and is not focused exclusively on commercial actions and activities.

**Coolhunting:** the search for and observation of innovative things that can improve our quality of life. A coolhunt is a trend signal for change. When more coolhunts occur in different regions at the same time, a pattern will emerge that will subsequently develop into a trend.

**Fad, craze or hype:** these are synonyms for the short-term, often impulsive and collective infatuation of a large population group for a particular product, experience, meme or type of behavior.

**Fashion:** a form of self-expression in a particular period and place, and also within the specific contexts of clothing, footwear, lifestyle, accessories, make-up, hairstyle and body decoration.

**Foresight:** looking forwards and attempting to imagine possible scenarios for the future. This can be done in a structured manner, using various methodologies. In *Trendsurfing – Innovating on Waves of Change* and in the Futureproved Trendsurf model, it proposes the 'What if... then this' methodology and the future impact diagram. Of course, there are many other methodologies, such as causal layered analysis, intuitive and analytical future scenarios, roadmapping, future wheels, the quantitative and qualitative Delphi method, forecasting, backcasting, etc. In some cases, even predictive SWOT and stakeholder analyses are regarded as valid future scenario planning methods.

**Future impact diagram:** a visual representation in a matrix model that compares the likelihood of future developments against their potential impact on society.

**Gigatrends:** a possible fourth trend layer, which, for the sake of clarity, has not been integrated into this book's model, because it relates primarily to the forty- or fifty-year conjuncture cycle proposed by Kondratiev, based on economic drivers.

**Hindsight:** looking backwards, especially at the history of a particular trend development. Hindsight allows us to establish the historical roots of the trend and to

follow its manifestation from the past to the present. As such, hindsight is a powerful tool for trend analytical research.

**Identity:** the combination of elements that make a person unique; the essence of who they are. In addition to personal characteristics, an individual's identity also contains numerous extra layers: national, cultural, psychological, social, genetic and, nowadays, even virtual.

**Innovation:** a process that makes use of a creative approach to develop ideas for dealing with particular problems, which can then be implemented in products, services, experiences, or any combination thereof.

**IPSETEEP:** an acronym that fuses societal trends and/or megatrends in relation to identity, population, social-cultural settings, our environment, the technosphere, economy and employment, energy and politics.

**Macrotrends:** this is a synonym for conshuman trends that can primarily be explained in behavioral terms. The crucial question that needs to be asked to understand macrotrends is the following: 'How do conshumans behave?' Conshumans face challenges posed by the wider societal context and respond to this with specific desires, preferences, values, norms, and action motives. Macrotrends are strongly demand-driven.

**Megatrends:** this is a synonym for the societal trends that determine the context of our present-day society. We can identify them by asking ourselves what kind of world we live in. Megatrends fit within the framework of the IPSETEEP acronym.

**Microtrends:** these are market trends or innovation clusters within a particular sector or industry, which offer an answer to macrotrends. We can identify them by asking ourselves what is happening in our market, industry and/or sector.

**Norms:** guidelines, rules, manners and modes of behavior for taking action. Norms regulate our daily social intercourse and our value-rational deeds.

**Trend pyramid:** a visual representation of the three types of trends – mega, macro and micro – in a hierarchical pyramid, to reflect the fact that they are often mutually dependent on each other. From within the context of megatrends, new tensions can be created in behavior and demand (macrotrends), to which each industry responds in its own manner via innovation clusters (microtrends).

**Trendsurf model:** this is the model that was developed by my trend agency, Futureproved Trendwatchers, to make it possible to distil trends in a structured and substantiated manner from a robust and thorough trend analysis, which can then be used as the basis for future innovations and implementations.

**Values:** the ideals that people as individuals and as a group wish to pursue in society. In addition, values also embody fundamental convictions about the things that are desirable, worthwhile and important for that society. Values can therefore be regarded as the principles on which public and social actions are based.

**Wildcards:** an event or series of events causing tremendous disruption in our society. These events are not predicted by observers, and they can therefore cause severe shocks or crises.

# Introduction

In 2023, we are living in turbulent times. Whoever thought that we might be living in a 21$^{st}$ century equivalent of the Roaring Twenties was sadly mistaken. Perhaps we might experience a replica of this historic period later in the decade, although personally I do not believe that history repeats itself. Sometimes it may be possible to see certain similarities between historical events, but one thing is certain: we are currently experiencing a perfect storm, a systemic crisis, in which disruptive changes follow each other in rapid succession.

In 2020, we were hit by the corona pandemic, which is perhaps not yet completely behind us, although we have learnt how to deal with it. Next came a massive logistical crisis, with major problems in the supply chain of raw materials and products (both finished and half-finished), which brought world trade almost to its knees. After that, the specter of an energy crisis emerged to haunt us, sending the prices for oil, gas and electricity through the roof. To make matters worse, Europe's leaders are warning us that the effects of this crisis might last for another five to ten years.

At the same time, the 20-year-long trend of globalisation is coming under increasing pressure, so that localisation is once again being put forward as a viable alternative. Or will we opt for the best of both worlds, and create a fusion between globalism and localism to glocalisation or locaglobalism? What's in a name? The fact is that we are searching for solutions, and our dependence on less reliable regimes is starting to come under discussion. Do we still want cheaper Asian products or Chinese high tech, if there is a risk that we might be spied on? Do we still want Russian gas and oil? At the moment, the answer to the latter question in most people's minds is almost certainly 'no'.

In the technology industry, the idea is increasingly being pushed that we need to better protect our own data via a sovereign cloud environment. And what to think

of our possible future dependency on others for food? These are all questions and choices that meet at the tangent between globalisation on the one hand and localisation on the other. Leaving that aside, it is certainly true that globalisation has led to increasing prosperity in recent times. Open economies derive greater benefit from a globalised free market, although the anti-globalists and the 'degrowth' movement will certainly have a different opinion.

Similarly in the geopolitical field, at the moment of writing we are witnessing the war between Russia and Ukraine, with no end in sight and the threat of nuclear escalation hanging over our heads like the sword of Damocles.

Perhaps an even greater long-term danger resides in the insidious poison that is slowly infecting our society and may one day bring about its mass annihilation: climate change and the related destruction of our planet's biodiversity. And as if all of this were not enough, in the years ahead we will be faced with the challenges of exploding demographical growth, increasing urbanisation and an ageing population, especially in Europe and large parts of Asia.

In the book *Trendsurfing – Innovating on Waves of Change,* I will regard this chain of high-impact events as wildcards. They create shocks in our society, in the same manner as an earthquake. Earthquakes on the seabed cause tsunamis, with devastating consequences for coastal areas. Wildcards have more or less the same effect on our society.

Trends are related to change. Changes usually take place slowly or sometimes happen by coincidence. But sometimes they create shockwaves that ripple throughout society. What kinds of changes are we experiencing today? And how will we deal with them? These are just a few of the questions that we will try to answer in the following pages. In this context, change is fundamental and will be discussed at length.

In the first part of *Trendsurfing* I define trends. What are they? How do they arise? Who sets them in motion and how do they evolve? Can we categorize them? How do they relate to each other? What about associated concepts like anti-trends, coolhunting, fashions, hypes and rages? I will also give numerous examples and use them as illustrations to add clarity. Are trends cyclical and can they be predicted?

However, we also need to remember that trends are more than just processes of change. They are also influenced, even directed, by behavioral change. It is not only

our society that is changing; people themselves are also subject to change. This leads to friction and tension within society that challenge us as individuals, so much so that we wish to exercise influence on those changes through our action motives.

These action motives are expressions of behavior, just like our values, norms and expectations. In this way, the challenges, desires, wishes and preferences of con-shumans are generated. This is not a misspelling or a typing error. I regard people not only as consumers but prefer to view them from a much wider perspective, as unique persons who act on the basis of individual motives, collective aspirations, social-cultural factors and (of course) economic interests. For me, consumerism is a far too narrow approach, in much the same way that I also have a critical view of Maslow's needs pyramid and therefore suggest an alternative to it later in the book. Likewise, I will ditch the DESTEP model and replace it with a new acronym: IPSETEEP.

The fact remains, however, that conshumans still wish to see their challenges, questions, desires and wishes answered. Every industry or sector, whether for profit or non-profit, seeks to find these answers through innovation. When these innovations form clusters within a certain market, we call them 'market trends'.

Trends and innovations are not synonyms for each other but rather a closely linked extension of each other. In my way of thinking, trend-driven innovations are strong innovations, especially when they are connected to the possibility of improving and optimising our quality of life.

For me, studying trends has a clear objective and an explicit importance when managing organisations, whether they're public or private. For this reason, the second part of *Trendsurfing* is methodological. I propose methods and models that will allow you to take the necessary steps to develop successful trend-driven implementations based on sharp and incisive trend analysis.

This is a story that involves a number of different phases. How do you spot trend waves? What sources can you use for it? Where can you find them? Trend research always consists of a good mix of desk and field research, and I will show you how to find your way through the rich but sometimes confusing maze of trend sources.

What actions do you need to make a strong trend analysis? Ultimately, this is a matter of finding the right tools and aids, such as the trend pyramid, hindsights,

foresights and future impact diagrams. I will also explain the use and the value of the trend innovation radar and the trend accelerator during the thought process.

These tools and aids all form part of the Futureproved Trendsurf model. This is a useful model if you want to study trends for yourself and it can serve as a basis for reaching your strategic or operational objectives. Hopefully, our analytical model will inspire you to develop new and exciting marketing and communication campaigns or provide a platform to launch new ideas, products, services or experiences.

Or do you intend to use trend analysis to carry out in-depth structural change in your organisation? Or perhaps to set up new business units? Or maybe to develop new earning models? Or even to adapt and implement your vision? Trend developments will guide you in making strategic decisions.

In the final chapter, I will deploy the Futureproved Trendsurfing model in two illustrative cases. This will provide you with insights into the applicability of the model, which you will then subsequently be able to use to make and test innovation policy based on a combination of trends and principles. Slowly but surely, you will learn by doing.

I hope that this book will have an impact on your thinking and prompt you to reflect on the way you do things and how you assess the future, just as during the preparation and writing of this book I also constantly questioned existing paradigms and was challenged to explore new angles of approach.

Carrying out trend research, compiling trend reports, giving keynote speeches, analysing trend developments, and clarifying them with concrete current examples: these things have all become my passion. It is this passion that I want to share with you and that is the reason why I wrote this book. I hope you enjoy reading it!

# PART 1

# WHAT ARE TRENDS?

In the first part of *Trendsurfing – Innovating on Waves of Change* I will give you some insights into the arsenal of terms and concepts that are most commonly used by trend researchers.

What are trends? Different authors give different definitions of the concept, and a number of different interpretations are possible. In this chapter, we will seek to define this core concept more precisely. In this respect, the historical evolution of the word and its use will be key to determining how we look at trends and how this process can further evolve in the future. At the same time, we will also ask why every company and organisation needs to take the opportunity to engage in trend research and how trends can be used to remain relevant in the future. Let's start with the last question.

The importance of detecting, understanding, and applying trends as a means of developing innovation is nowadays top of mind in companies and organisations that wish to arm themselves against an uncertain future. Companies want to know if their products and services are 'on trend', so that they can be certain that they are keeping up with the times or even running ahead of them. Public authorities, organisations and businesses do not want to miss the trend boat and thus seek to discover new and progressive ideas, hoping that these new ideas and the result-ant products and services will appeal to conshumans and might even become addictive.

Studying, describing, and implementing trends demands the use of a number of skills. At the same time, it also requires lots of common sense and curiosity, as well as an appropriate framework and a clear methodology. Together, these form the tools that will allow you to surf the trend waves and develop exciting innovations. As an organisation, the more you engage with trends and trend research, the bet-ter, more performant, more relevant and more innovative you will become.

## The historical evolution of 'trends'

Originally, the word 'trend' was derived from Middle English and High German. During medieval times, it meant something like 'to turn', in the sense of to change, to return or to move position. It could also mean 'to spin' or 'to revolve'. The idea of 'change' is the most important of these variants in terms of the development of the modern definition of a trend. In 1936, the word 'trend' appeared for the very

first time in a lifestyle magazine, published by the English Design & Industries Association.

Until deep in the 20th century, 'trends' was also a term used by mathematicians, statisticians and economists. For them, a trend was the upwards (positive) or downwards (negative) movement of a curve, based on a series of figures. In this sense, a trend is a kind of deviation or anomaly. A good example of this can be found in the book *It's getting better all the time* by Moore & Simon.[1] Moore and Simon described recent history and changes using historical timelines and statistics.

From the 1970s and the 1980s onwards, trends were above all associated with fashion, lifestyle, and taste, largely as a result of the influence of the first generation of trendwatchers. These charismatic individuals were able to pick up trend signals and package them in a way that allowed them to talk about trends convincingly and passionately. These early trendwatchers were soon regarded as predictors of the future. You could almost see them as a modern version of the Oracle of Delphi! Companies active in the lifestyle and fashion industry began asking them to indicate the new directions in which they should move. Marketeers and product developers started asking questions like: 'What will be the next big fashion thing?' or 'What will be the defining colours for the next summer or winter collection?' Companies during this period were primarily interested in anticipating new trends to optimise their marketing and production potential.

Until the 1970s, trends were highly retroactive and tended to be viewed from a historical perspective. Since the 1980s, however, trends have become something proactive and are now seen as future-oriented. In their standard work on the subject, trend sociologist Henrik Vejlgaard and trendwatcher Martin Raymond talk about trends in terms of changes in forms of lifestyle, taste, and design.

At the same time, a perceptual problem arose, due to the fact that trends were primarily associated with their predictive nature. And because the predictions of the trendwatchers were not always accurate, by the start of the 1990s trendwatching was coming under increasing scrutiny and criticism. Consequently, this relatively new discipline already needed to reinvent itself, which led to a greater emphasis on research, knowledge, and skills. By the end of the 1990s, the questions being put to trendwatchers were being formulated differently, along the lines of: 'What signals of behavioral change can we see in certain groups of consumers and how can we respond to those changes?'

Because of these developments, by the turn of the century trendwatchers were starting to elaborate methodologies and search for applicable models to explain trends. The trendwatchers of today now use market research, observe what is happening in the streets and glean information from a wide variety of sources, which they interpret critically. Moreover, they have also acquired the necessary skills to identify patterns. Since the millennium, we have seen more and more trend researchers making their appearance in innovation teams and the number of available training courses in trend research has increased worldwide.

Trends and trend research are no longer tarnished with an image of vagueness and fortune telling. Instead, trendwatching has been transformed into a serious discipline with a huge added value for companies and organisations that wish to embrace innovation as the best way of preparing for the future. Modern trendwatching is now based on proven methods, skills and knowledge. Trend researchers work in multidisciplinary teams with (art) historians, anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, economists, philosophers, statisticians and mathematicians. This has immeasurably enriched the process of trend research and has led to better and much stronger trend analyses.

## The trend definition

If you ask a thousand randomly chosen people in the street to explain what they understand by the word 'trend', you will almost certainly get many different answers. I do this kind of test regularly, whenever I give a talk to students at universities and university colleges. In general, I hear various bits and pieces of ideas, which, when taken together, help to form a comprehensive definition of the 'trend' concept. This is not a criticism, because – as you have just been able to read in the previous section – the concept itself has undergone many changes and transformations. Moreover, every trendwatcher, trend researcher and innovator has their own definition, which complicates matters still further!

Rohit Bhargava, an American marketeer and trendwatcher, has a fairly rudimentary definition. For him, a trend is 'a unique curated observation about the accelerating present'.[2] Henry Mason and David Mattin see consumer trends as a phenomenon that emerges at the fault line between basic human needs, drivers of change, and innovation.[3] Anne Lise Kjaer describes a trend as 'a steady upris-

ing curve of an event or an influence that has the potential to become a powerful change-maker in society'.[4]

You see what I mean? Giving a simple definition of a trend that is acceptable to everyone is not easy. With the definition that I use, I have attempted to summarise the different aspects of the concept comprehensively. This provides me with my own frame of reference, within which I operate and which I also use in my research methodology, keynotes, coaching trajectories, and training courses.

**Trends** are processes of change in human behavior within a societal context, manifesting themselves in different ways and in different social groups, striving to improve the quality of life through innovation. **Trends are dynamic, evolutionary**, influential, impactful and they leave traces in society. Trends are observable and express themselves through ideas, language, culture, (life)style, taste, behavior, products, services and events.

An all-embracing definition of this kind means that we need to look more deeply at certain aspects. That trends are associated with change is something that trend-watchers worldwide can agree on. In the following chapters, we will analyse this concept of change. We will do the same with the concept of behavior, which consists of action motives, human expectations, values, and norms.

In addition, we will describe the societal context and shed light on the meaning of terms like improved quality of life, innovation, observability and trend expressions. We will further discuss related trend concepts, such as anti-trends, hypes, fads, crazes, and hits, as well as sketching their fundamental differences with trends. Lastly in this section, we will answer the question of how trends (but also hypes) evolve over time and the extent to which we are able to insert trends into the market, manipulate them and even predict them.

# The change process

## 1. Our world is changing faster and more drastically

We can all see that the world is changing at an increasingly rapid pace. Trend researchers are interested in this change process. This is something that you can observe while it is taking place. In nature, you can see it in the changing of the seasons. You can also see it in certain animals; for example, the way in which a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly or how a snake is able to shed its own skin. Of course, people also change: we get older, develop wrinkles, need glasses or a hearing aid, until we eventually hear our friends say: 'My goodness, how you've changed!' Fortunately, it can also work in the opposite direction. If we go on a diet and shed a few kilos, our appearance changes for the better. We look thinner, younger and more dynamic. Now we hear: 'My goodness, how fit you look!' Change processes are tangible, as are the way we dress, our lifestyle, our behavior and our eating habits. Let's look at this in detail.

Get out your old pre-digital photo albums and examine the photographs. Observe how you looked: the clothes you wore, your hairstyle, your once slim waistline... This can sometimes be rather shocking. In any case, you will certainly notice a difference between then and now. And you will conclude – quite rightly – that it is not just you that has changed. In fact, everything has changed. Your body might have been transformed by the process of human ageing, but no one would be seen wearing such clothes today and that hairstyle went out of fashion decades ago! In other words, your former clothes, hair and, by extension, your lifestyle are now outdated and no longer correspond with today's fashion or your personal taste. In short, these things are all characterized by change. Society, fashion and your personality have all evolved with time. They are different. Changed.

Look at the following cartoon of a young man sunbathing. In 1996, he had no tattoos. Twenty years later he is covered in them, listening to his favorite Spotify tracks on his brand-new smartphone, none of which existed back in 1996.